DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 397 262 CE 072 096

AUTHOR	Driscoll, Margaret
TITLE	Professional Development. Resource Connections.
PUB DATE	96
NOTE	12p.
PUB TYPE	Journal Articles (080) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)
JOURNAL CIT	Training Scene; v26 n2-4 Feb-Apr 1996
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Certification; *College Programs; Degrees (Academic); *Evaluation Criteria; *Graduate Study; Higher Education; Independent Study; Information Sources; *Labor Force Development; Professional Continuing Education; *Professional Development; Program Design; *School Choice
IDENTIFIERS	*Massachusetts (Boston)

ABSTRACT

This document consists of a series of three short articles that appeared in the "Resource Connections" column of three consecutive issues of the newsletter of the Boston chapter of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD). The articles are intended for adults considering enrolling in a professional development program, and examine the nature and scope and pros/cons of degree, certificate, and self-study professional development programs and discuss various factors to consider when selecting a type of program and/or a specific program. The first article, "Professional Development: Selecting the Right Program," examines the potential benefits and drawbacks of degree programs and includes a matrix detailing basic information about the degree professional development programs offered by eight colleges in the Boston area (including information about degree(s) awarded, average completion times, program costs, special study opportunities, and admission requirements). Included in the second article, "Professional Development: Certification Programs," are the following: discussion of the benefits of certificate programs, the importance of researching certification programs, and sources of information about certificate programs; 12 questions to ask when choosing a certificate program (questions pertaining to programs' sponsors, content, recognition, and refresher requirements); and names/phone numbers of 11 certificate programs in the Boston area. The third article, "Professional Development: Developing a Self Directed Study Program," examines the benefits and limitations of self-study professional development programs and explains the steps in planning a program (determine goals; write a clear set of measurable objectives; create a milestone table; identify resources; and plan a culminating experience). (MN)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 397 262

Professional Development

Resource Connections

Margaret Driscoll

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL
HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M Driscoll

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

CE 072096

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Professional Development: Selecting the Right Program

by Margaret Driscoll

If you are someone who has considered getting more education, spring is a great time to start thinking about professional development. You have plenty of time to apply for graduate programs, examine certificate courses, or plan a self-study endeavor. If you have made attempts at professional development before, and have not succeeded, then this series will help you examine why and develop a plan to try again. This article examines traditional degree programs and next month's article will explore certificate programs and self-study programs.

Committing to a professional development program is an important decision that will require a big investment of effort, time, and money. It is important to avoid the old mind set of getting a degree for the sake of getting a degree. You need to select a degree, certificate, or self study program that will position you for success in a changing market. This article is designed to help you assess your options and choose the right form of professional development. There is a strong correlation between continuing education and compensation. The November 1995, issue of ***Training*** magazine calculates that training professionals with masters degrees earn between $1,200 - $7,700 more than people with bachelors degrees. In this time of downsizing it has never been more important to invest in yourself and your future.

Placement professionals emphasize the growing demand for trainers with specialized skills and knowledge. Cindy Boyle, of ClearPoint Consultants, observes that the top three technical skill sets are: 1) network trainers, 2) object oriented trainers, and 3) database trainers (i.e., Oracle and Sybase). She explains that "firms are not requiring Certified Novell Engineer (CNE) status, but trainers that have CNE credentials are commanding substantially better compensation." In addition to technical skills and strong experience there is a growing demand for advanced degrees in instructional design, human resources, and business administration. Edward Stolar, of The Essex Group, has been placing people for several years. In placing non-technical training professionals, Ed explains "a masters in instructional design brings a resume to the top of the pile."

What Kind of Professional Development?

The first thing to consider is what kind of program will serve your needs. The search for the right program begins with your taking inventory of your present skills, knowledge, and experience. Avoid enrolling in a program that will teach you everything you already know. Next take some time to research the skills and experience needed to advance your career. Talk to people who have positions similar to ones that interest you. Ask them about the skills and knowledge needed to do that job, and how they got those skills. A good inventory of your strengths and the area in which you need growth are essential to selecting the right program.

There are three kinds of programs that you should consider; degree programs, certificate programs, and self study. Each of these options have strengths and weaknesses that make them the right choice for certain situations.

Degree Programs

Degree programs refer to structured educational experiences offered by colleges and universities that result in bachelor, masters, and doctoral degrees. When most people think about continuing professional education, degree programs are usually the first thing that come to mind. Because training is such an eclectic field, the degrees pursued by training professionals range from masters in education to masters in computer science.

An informal survey at a recent gathering of training professionals evidenced this diversity. Members had the following degrees: chemical engineering (MS), instructional design (M.Ed.), business administration (MBA), adult education (MA), and computer science (MS).

The advantages of degree programs are: they are recognized nationally; they have organized curriculums; they offer career placement; and they are often covered by company employee benefits programs. Hiring organizations find it easy to understand and assess the value of a degree offered by a recognized institution. Firms depend on these institutions to set and maintain standards for performance and outcomes. The national recognition of degrees makes it easy to get a diploma in one part of the country and have it recognized in another. A second benefit of degree programs is structured curriculums; they suggests the sequencing and selection of courses. A third benefit of degree programs is the access to career placement services. Larger institutions provide career services that may include resume writing, career counseling and placement services. Lastly, many companies offer tuition assistance that may pay for all or part or your tuition if the course is job related.

Degree programs also have drawbacks such as: a serious time commitment, costly tuition and fees, and rigid curriculum requirements. Degree programs require a substantial time commitment to classes and studying.

A rule of thumb is that for every credit hour you should expect to spend one hour a week preparing for that class. For example, a three credit course will require three hours of study. Depending on the program the tuition and fees can range from $10,000 - 21,000. Special attention should be paid to the fees, books, travel, and other incidental expenses which may not be covered by employee benefits. While a defined curriculum offers structure, it can also be rigid and require that you take courses that do not interest you or meet your needs.

If after reviewing the pros and cons of a degree program, and examining the Graduate School Matrix (pages 6 and 7), you are still not sure—stay tuned. Next month's issue will examine certificate programs offered by colleges, universities, professional, and commercial organizations. In addition, self-study programs will be discussed.

See page 8 for a brief description of the schools reviewed on pages 6 and 7.

Survey Questions	Lesley College	Rivier College	Suffolk University	University of Massachusetts
Degrees Awarded	M.S. in Training & Development	M.S. in Human Resource Management	M.S. in Human Resource Development	M.Ed in Instructional Design
Day and/or Evening Programs	Evening & Weekend	Evening & Weekend	Late Afternoon & Evening	Evening
Average Completion Time	24 months	2½-3 years	Part Time – 2½ Full Time 1 year	2½ years
Cost per Credit	$ 375	$ 266	$ 400	$ 378
Number of Credit Hours Required for Degree	36	36	36	36
Satellite Location	Yes Greater Boston, Rte. 128 & Springfield Sites	Yes Windham, NH	No	No
Opportunities for Independent Study	Yes Applied Research	Yes	Yes	Yes
Opportunities for Internships	Yes Required	No	Yes	Yes
Number of People in Program	200	317	28	110
Next Program Start Date	February 23, 1996 (Newton)	May 1996	May 1996	September 1996
Prescribed Course Sequence vs. Free Selection	Prescribed Course Sequence	Free Selection	Free Selection	Free Selection
Number of Transfer Credits Accepted	None	9	6	6
Culminating Experience (Comprehensive Exam, Thesis, Project)	Internship or Applied Research Project	No	Project	Thesis or Project
Admission Requirements	3 years full-time work experience, resume, BA or BS (GPA of 2.50 or greater), 2 letters of recommendation, personal statement of professional goals	BA or BS	Bachelor Degree, MAT, references, application	Resume, MAT, statement of interest, academic background and career goals
Contact for Admissions Information	Marilyn Gove (617) 349-8691	Dr. George Shagory (800) 447-4843	Dr. Barbara Ash (617) 573-8280 (508) 695-0173	Canice McGarry (617) 287-7622

Graduate School Matrix

Survey Questions	Boston University (Main Campus)	Boston University (Tyngsboro)	Clark University	Emmanuel College
Degrees Awarded	Ed.M. and Ed.D. in Human Resource Education	Ed.M. in Human Resource Education	M.S. Professional Communication (Human Resource Concentration)	M.A. in Human Resource Management
Day and/or Evening Programs	Evenings and Saturdays	Weekend Days	Evening	Evening
Average Completion Time	Ed.M. – 3 years Ed.D. – 4 years	9 month (or 21 month option)	3 years	3 years
Cost per Credit	Ed.M. – $ 312 Ed.D. – $ 485	$ 700 (includes books, meals...)	$ 200	$ 410
Number of Credit Hours Required for Degree	Ed.M. – 32 Ed.D. – 68	32	48	36
Satellite Location	Yes Tyngsboro	No	Yes Framingham	No
Opportunities for Independent Study	No	No	Yes	Yes
Opportunities for Internships	Yes	No	Yes, required for students with less than 3 years professional experience	Yes
Number of People in Program	15 (total)	20	100	50
Next Program Start Date	Summer 1996	September 1996	May 1996	May 1996
Prescribed Course Sequence vs. Free Selection	Free Selection	Prescribed Course Sequence	Free Selection	Free Selection
Number of Transfer Credits Accepted	8	None	2 Courses	6
Culminating Experience (Comprehensive Exam, Thesis, Project)	Thesis	Independent Project	Thesis after 10 courses, or 12 courses with no thesis	Internship or directed research project
Admission Requirements	Ed.M. – BA or BS, letters of recommendation, MAT or GRE Ed.D. – Masters Degree, letters of recommendation, MAT or GRE	BA, BS, letters of reference, interview	BA, BS, application form	Undergraduate transcript, standardized test, two letters of recommendation
Contact for Admissions Information	Dr. Kathy Vaughan (617) 3353-4665	Janice Ackerman (508) 649-9731 x249	Max Hess (508) 793-7215	Center for Adult Studies (617) 735-9700

Professional Development *continued from page 5*

Leading Graduate Schools

Descriptions provided by school representatives

Boston University (Main Campus)

The HRE program is designed for students who intend to work in planning, implementing, and evaluating private-sector and government training programs. Classes are offered in the evening and on Saturdays. Master's students can complete the program in three years and doctoral candidates can complete the program in three to five years.

Boston University (Tyngsboro Campus)

This accelerated graduate program for training professionals is a weekend series of eight integrated, graduate-level courses leading to a master's degree (Ed.M.) in human resource education in either nine or twenty one months. It is designed for training and development professionals interested in broadening their skills and adding to their credentials while continuing an active career.

For doctoral applicants who already have a master's degree, the accelerated program can serve as a residency requirement.

Clark University

Clark University's newest professional graduate degree program (Master of Science in Professional Communication – Concentration in Human Resource Development), now in its second full year of operation, is designed to enhance the communication and management skills of mid-level professionals through practical application method courses. The curriculum balances critical thinking and creativity with the technical and managerial tools that profit and non-profit organizations demand of their leaders. The concentration in Human Resource Development offers not only basic courses in organizational and interpersonal communication but also a six course sequence in conflict management and third-party intervention and facilitation.

Emmanuel College

Emmanuel's program prepares HR professionals to be generalists. Graduates include HR managers, directors and vice presidents in a variety of organizations and industries: retailing, banking, insurance, manufacturing, high technology, advertising, medical institutions, museums, and government agencies. Core courses prepare students to be leaders in managing organizational change and transition while a range of electives provide students with the skills necessary to administer two of an organization's largest expenditures: compensation and benefits.

Lesley College

Since 1988, Lesley's Training and Development Master's Program has remained unique. Representing excellence in education since 1909, Lesley has a long standing commitment to adult learning. In this program, based upon ASTD's model of professional competency, learners progress as a cohort, a diverse group who themselves become a learning organization and later, a professional network. Located in the School of Management, the program can emphasize real business challenges facing tomorrow's organizations. A required internship enables learners to apply new skills in real organizational projects under the guidance of experienced professionals. The program was carefully designed to permit learners to maximize professional development while maintaining busy personal and professional lives. In all, there's no better way to enhance your career, personal or professional development!

Rivier College

Rivier College offers a Master's of Science Degree in Human Resource Management. Experienced faculty present a curriculum with a pragmatic focus. A real work project allows students to practice skills they learn. Several career tracks are available to students.

Suffolk University

The concentration in Adult and Organizational Learning is designed for professionals in any discipline who may wish to pursue careers in a variety of adult education settings, including corporate training; consulting; professional associations; government; community-based programs; libraries; hospitals; and post-secondary institutions.

- Cutting-edge," 30-credit, competency-based curriculum includes organizational learning; systems thinking, self-managed instruction and distance learning; needs assessment; grant and proposal writing; presentation skills and adult training methods; learning styles; instructional design; marketing; program management and evaluation; business competencies and computer applications; and instructional technology.

- Courses taught by experienced adult educators, human resource professionals, and corporate trainers.

- Diverse, 18-member advisory board comprised of practioners serve as program mentors."

- Internships, independent study, small classes, and programs tailored to individual needs.

University of Massachusetts

The Instructional Design Graduate Program is designed to prepare students as educators and trainers of adult learners in a variety of workplace settings including business, industry, education, government, healthcare and public service. This multi-disciplinary program meets the needs of both pre-service and mid-career professionals in media, education, and/or training and development. Utilizing the principles and practices of adult education, theoretical and applied courses concentrate on the instructional design process, adult learning theory, communication, and educational media and technology.

Professional Development: Certification Programs

Editor's Note: *This article is the second in a series of three on the topic of continuing your professional education.*

Degree programs are not for everyone. If you already have a masters degree or know exactly what skills or knowledge you need, a certification program may be a better option for continuing professional education. Certification programs are structured learning experiences that result in the learner's being awarded a document that testifies to the learner's qualifications. If you have been keeping up with your promotional mail you may have noticed that certification programs are offered for everything from technical skills to organizations skills.

Benefits of Certificate Programs

Like degree programs, certification programs have benefits and limitations. The benefits of certification program are the focused outcomes, relatively short time commitments, and skills based approach. If you want to develop a specific skill such as Novel network engineering or learn to administer the Myers-Briggs test, certification is a good option. In most cases certification programs teach narrow and deep skills. Instruction is focused on clearly defined outcomes, you will not be required to take courses that are superfluous to the topic at hand. A second benefit is the limited time commitments.

In some cases the certification program can be as short as a day or as long as a few weeks. Of course the term "short" is relative, in this case, the comparison is to a full degree program at a college or university. Certification programs are an excellent way to quickly retool after a downsizing or a change in organizational responsibilities. These program are good for people who do not have the time to attend a lengthy degree program. A third benefit of certification programs is the skills based approach. Most programs certify that the learner can do something. As a generality, the learning is very instrumental, that is the skills and knowledge learned can be applied immediately. Some companies that do not offer tuition assistance for degree program are willing to pay for employees to attend certification programs. Certification programs are limited in scope, and can be easily justified with short term return-on-investment calculations.

Researching Certification Programs

Researching certification programs is important because these programs are not as easy to assess as degree programs. The two major considerations are the status or recognition of the certificate and the value of the skills. Degree programs offered from universities and colleges are easy to assess; thanks to reference tools like *Baron's Profiles of American Colleges*, you can find objective information on institutions. Certificate program are much more difficult to track down. The first challenge will be to find a list of all the certification programs offered in the subject area that interest you. At the present time there is no definitive catalog of certification programs.

Not all certificate programs are subject to oversight. Institutions that grant degrees are subject to over sight by organizations like the New England Assoc. of Schools and Colleges. There are no equivalent oversight boards for

continued on p. 6

Develop Your Management For Excellence

- ***Build*** skills
- ***Develop*** talent
- ***Achieve*** outstanding results

all through
Accelerated Modular Education

We can be your single source for management education!

ILS
INNOVATIVE LEARNING SYSTEMS
Harvy Simkovits
17 Russell Terrace, Unit 2 Arlington, MA 02174
Phone/Fax (617) 648-2021

Computer-Based Training

- English as a Second Language
- Reading Skills
- Basic Math – Pre-Calculus
- Business Writing
- Keyboarding
- Writing on a Word Processor

For information or a catalog call:

The Kilmartin Company

800-993-9633

Professional Development *continued from page 5*

organizations or companies that grant certificates. This does not mean that you should shy away from a certificate program, you just need to be prepared to do some research. Once you have identified a certificate program that meets your needs, you should explore four aspects of the program:

1) Who is the program's sponsor?
2) Is the content timely and applicable?
3) How widely is the program recognized? and
4) Are post certificate services available?

Certificate programs are generally offered by four types of organizations, academic institutions, manufacturers, professional organizations and for profit educational entities.

The easiest certificate programs to locate are those sponsored by community colleges, colleges, and universities. In many cases, the certificate programs are a subset of a degree program. A second kind of sponsoring organization that is becoming more common is a manufacturer or vendor. Companies such as Novell and Microsoft sponsor programs that certify people to use or teach the use of their products. A variation on this is the use of certification programs to qualify people to use a propriety process such as Information Mapping or to administer a test such as PDI Personal Decisions Inc. If you are interested in software, hardware or process skills that are cutting edge, certification programs sponsored by the vendor may be the best source for professional development. A third kind of sponsoring organization is professional associations that offers certification in very specialized area such as Computer Education Management Association (CEdMA) for computer educators, and the National Environmental Training Association (NETA) that certifies environmental educators.

The fourth kind of sponsoring organization is a for profit educational entity. Frequently these organizations offer programs that tour the country running classes in hotel ballrooms or conference centers. Some of the better known firms have their own training center.

No matter who the sponsoring organization is, you should examine the content and context of the program. As a trainer all of this seems obvious, but it is worth stating anyway – ask to see an outline or syllabi of the program.

As you look at the goal(s) of the program, assess if the instruction offers depth of content, timely and relevant topics, practice of skills, effective instructional methodologies, and feedback. If the skills to be learned require that you use hardware or software, ask about the versions of the software and the operating system used on the hardware. All of this can be a daunting task if you are planning to take a certificate program in a topic area in which you have no expertise. In this case, contact someone who is working in the area, or is a subject matter expert, who can help you assess the program.

Questions to Ask About Certification Programs

Sponsor

1. Who is the sponsoring organization?
2. Is this organization, association, or company an authority in this content area?
3. Who does the sponsoring organization employ to teach in the program?

Content

1. If hardware and software are important to the instruction, is the equipment used in the classrooms and labs current and up to industry standards?
2. If you do not immediately use the skills learned in the certificate program, how quickly will those skills become dated or obsolete?
3. What process is used to award certification? Are participants asked to: take a paper and pencil test, complete a project, log an agreed upon number of hours, or pass an oral examination.

Recognition

1. If you hope to change jobs based on the certificate, is certification an acceptable substitute for workplace experience?
2. Is the certificate recognized by hiring mangers? Is it recognized in a wide geographical area?
3. If the certificate program is offered by a college or university, can you transfer the credits earned in the certification program to a degree program at a later date?

Refresher

1. How often is re-certification required? What does it cost to maintain certification?
2. If the certification is based on hardware or software, are there special programs offered to allow you to learn the new releases at a reduced rate?
3. Is there an association or users group associated with the certificate that can help you continue your professional development after certification?

The third aspect of a certificate program to be explored is recognition. If you are hoping to use the certificate to strengthen your resume, you should explore the value of the certificate with hiring managers. Some certifications are so well recognized that they have become part of the job description that get included in newspaper advertisements such as Certified Novel Instructors CNI. It is also useful to talk to certification holders, and those in the process of getting certification about their experience. The recognition of the certificate is more important for people who want to change jobs or make career moves. If you are in this situation you will have to rely on the certificate to open doors for you that might otherwise demand experience.

Lastly, does the sponsoring organization offer any post certificate services. Do they provide any career services such as job placement or resume writing. Is there any kind of newsletter, users groups, or refresher seminars offered to certificate holders? If the skills are based on hardware or software releases, do they offer certificate holders the opportunity to learn the new version with out retaking the entire program?

Researching certification programs is hard work. You should allow yourself several weeks to make the calls needed to track down information on programs. All of this research will have the side benefit of giving you a reason to network with people. Talk to people who are part of the industry that you are interest in becoming a part of after certification.

If degree and certificate program do not meet you professional development needs you may want to explore self-study programs.

Next month's article will look at the benfits and limitations of developing your own self-study program and how to get started.

Margaret Driscoll is an EdD candidate in Adult Education/Distance Education at Columbia University. She holds Masters Degrees in Workplace Learning and Instructional Technology as well as an MBA. She spent several years at Digital Equipment Corporation and is the Course Development Manager at Interleaf, Inc.

See Page 8 for a Sampling of Certificate Programs offered by Boston Area

Certificate Program Sampler

Compiled by Elizabeth Moses and Paul Gilbert

These Boston-area institutions offer certificate programs for the Training & Development/Human Resources professional:

ASTD Mass Chapter-Boston
Train-The-Trainer 8 Week Accelerated Program
(Begins March 15th) ..... (617) 969-5922

Bentley College
Human Resource Management
Information Design
Meeting Management
Project Management (New – Begins this Spring)
For all programs ..... (617) 891-2800

Boston College
Leadership for the Common Good
For more information ..... (617) 552-2044

Boston University
Information Systems Management
Project Management
Continuous Quality Improvement
Training and Development
Business Communication
Computer Applications Training
For all programs ..... (508) 649-4200

Clark University
Conflict Management
(New – Begins this Fall) ..... (508) 793-7742

Emmanuel College
Management and Leadership Skills
For more information ..... (617) 735-9700

Lesley College
Organizational Development ..... (617) 349-8693
Health Services Management ..... (617) 349-8691

Rivier College
Human Resource Management
For more information ..... (800) 888-1311 Ext. 237

Simmons College
Managing for Results ..... (617) 521-3835
Program Developing Managers ..... (617) 521-3835
Negotiation ..... (617) 521-2480
Strategic Thinking ..... (617) 521-2480

Suffolk University
Human Resources
Adult and Organizational Learning
For more information ..... (617) 695-0173 or (508) 573-8280

University of Massachusetts and Boston
Dispute Resolution ..... (617) 287-7370
Critical and Creative Thinking ..... (617) 287-6520

CORRECTION FROM LAST ISSUE: Suffolk University – MS Program in Adult and Organizational Learning – Program is 30 credits (not 36).

Professional Development: Developing a Self Directed Study Program

by Margaret Driscoll

This is the third installment in the series on professional development. So far, we have looked at degree programs and certification programs as means to enhance and update skill. These are great options for many people because they are structured and well organized, but they are not the only options. This installment examines "self-directed study programs." There are many definitions of self-directed learning. In this article self-directed learning will refer to learner designed programs that result in the acquisition of new skills or knowledge through the use of multiple resources. This is an important definition to keep in mind as you consider this option.

Benefits and Limitations

Self directed learning programs may make you think back to the late 1960s or early 1970s when self-directed learning (SDL) was at the height of popularity in the academic literature and professional journals. The popularity and over use of this idea led to its demise. However, revisiting the benefits and limitations of this professional development option in the 1990s is a good use of time. The benefits of self-directed learning may be even more meaningful today than they were two or three decades ago. The first benefit of this kind of program is the ability to focus on just what interests you. As a truly self-directed learner you can choose to learn exactly what you want. Unlike structured programs that have core requirements and mandatory readings, SDL puts you in control of the content.

A second benefit is the ability to "discover" and pursue new skills and knowledge. If you choose to explore HTML you may "discover" JAVA and choose to learn to program applets. In a structured program you may not be able to change the focus of your learning as easily.

The third advantage is control of time and cost. As the person directing your own learning you make the schedule and choose the resources that you can afford to complete your program. As you design your program, you can choose to borrow books from local libraries or buy them; or you can attend inexpensive local presentations given by national speakers, or attend a national conference at which national speakers are featured.

Self-directed learning programs have limitations, too. The most obvious limitation is the lack of recognition. Degree and certification programs offer learners proof or documentation of having mastered content that can be shared with employers. Self-study programs are designed and executed by the learner without a third party to validate the learning. In an ideal world where, "what you know is what counts," documentation would not be an issue. In reality many employers want to reduce their risk in hiring by asking for degrees and certification as evidence of knowledge and skill.

A second limitation is the ability to "know what you don't know," that is how you can create a plan to learn a new skill when you do not know what abilities and knowledge are required to master that skill. As an example, if you choose to create a self-directed learning program to master designing web-based training, what are the sub-skills required to become an effective web-based training designer? Lastly, self-directed learning requires a great deal of self-discipline. In a SDL program, there is no one demanding that you

continued on p. 6

Professional Development *continued from page 5*

meet deadlines or to provide encouragement. The traditional support mechanisms found in degree and certification programs are not available to the self-directed learner.

Planning a Self-Directed Learning Program

If the benefits out weigh the limitations, and you are interested in designing your own self-study program, the following steps will help you create your own program.

1. Determine what you need to know

- Invest adequate time to get a very clear goal established.
- Determine exactly what skills or knowledge you need to master.
- Use this as an opportunity to talk to experts who can help you define the skills and sub-skills needed to achieve your goal.

Be flexible, if you discover the skills experts are defining are not what you expect. Don't dismiss them.

For example: if you initially choose to study interventions that help workers "cope with stress," but industry leaders recommend that you explore the effect of "change," be willing to give serious thought to exploring interventions that help "workers deal with change."

2. Write a clear set of measurable objectives

Once you have identified the skills and sub-skills needed to achieve your goal, write objectives. Make the objectives measurable so that you can benchmark your accomplishments. For example: if you choose to learn how to author multimedia courseware as your goal, break down the Goal into manageable objectives. Some objectives might be:

- List ten major considerations in designing a GUI
- Critique a navigation strategy for a popular multimedia program
- Identify effective interaction strategies for teaching skills in the psychomotor domain and explain why they are effective

3. Create a milestone table

Create a simple table that lists what you need to accomplish and the anticipated dates for completing the tasks. Make the milestones small enough so that you feel a sense of accomplishment and progress. If you want to learn how to develop job-aids, make a list of articles you plan to read, identify tools you will develop, and meetings/conferences you plan to attend. Put dates opposite each task. Refer to the milestone table frequently to keep yourself motivated and focused.

4. Identify resources

Depending on your budget and timeline, you will want to explore as many resources as possible. If you want to learn about authoring multimedia, think about all the traditional and non-traditional resources available. You can also incorporate college courses and other structured experiences, if your budget permits.

Think about some of the following options:

- Printed materials (books, journals, magazines)
- Professional meetings (ASTD, ISPI, BCS)
- Conferences, conventions, trade shows
- Internships
- Job shadowing
- Internet (WWW, newsgroups, Listserves)

5.Plan a culminating experience

Plan to do a project that will allow you to integrate your new knowledge. If you elect to learn facilitator skills, plan an event that will allow you to exercise these skills.

Conclusion

Education and development is not a luxury for training and development professionals in the 1990s. The job market is a constantly changing environment with great uncertainty and opportunity. Professionals need to take responsibility for their own development, and monitor the market place for the skills and knowledge that will be in demand tomorrow.

As you think more about professional development, it may help to have a few rules of thumb to guide your thinking. First, establish some goals for yourself. Many fortune 500 companies mandate five days of training a year for every employee. Depending on your needs this may be too low, but it makes a minimum to target. Second, constantly monitor the environment to identify future trends and skills. Some of the best strategies to identify trends are reading trade journals, scanning help wanted ads, and attending professional society meetings. Other strategies are networking with people within and outside the profession, and analyzing the topics offered at leading national conferences like ASTD, ISPI, and Interactive 96. Third, don't think that getting a masters degree or certification means you are done. BE A LIFE-LONG LEARNER!